- Ban on futures trading in tur and urad from January 24, 2007, wheat and rice from February 28, 2007.
- Reduction in import duty on palm group of oils by 10 percentage points in August, 2006 and by a further 10-12.5 percentage points in January, 2007. Maintaining tariff value for assessing import duty unchanged at July, 2006 level.
- In the Budget 2007-08, crude as well as refined edible oils have been exempted from additional countervailing duty of 4 per cent. Duty on sunflower oil, both crude and refined, has been reduced by 15 per cent.
- Ban on export of skimmed milk powder.
- Steps by Reserve Bank of India to reduce liquidity in the system by increasing the cash reserve ratio and repo rates, and stepping up the Market Stabilisation Scheme.

(d) It is expected that with the measures undertaken by Government the inflation rate will come down in the near future.

Institutional credit facility to farmers

*209. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has any plan to expand institutional credit facility to farmers, small and medium agriculturists in particular;

(b) what is the break-up of the credit given to farmers with below 5 acres of irrigated land and to those with 10 acres of dry land;

(c) whether his Ministry has been considering to reduce the rate of interest on loan made available to farmers; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) A Farm Credit Package was announced on June 18, 2004 for doubling the flow of credit to agriculture by the formal Institutional Credit Structure. The target of doubling of agriculture credit was achieved within two years itself. The target of agriculture credit and achievement against it from 2003-04 to

2006-07 (upto December) is as under:

(Rs. in crore)

Year	Target	Achievement
2003-04	No target fixed	86,981
2004-05	1,05,000	1,25,309
2005-06	1,41,000	1,80,486
2006-07*	1,75,000	1,49,343

*As on December, 2006

Data Reporting System of Reserve Bank of India does not generate information in respect of credit given to farmers with below 5 acre of irrigated land and to those with 10 acres of dry land. However, in terms of policy of RBI, under the special agricultural credit plan, 40% of disbursement of direct advances should be for small and marginal farmers.

Data of disbursements to small and marginal farmers published by Reserve Bank of India indicates that around 50% of the loans issued by scheduled commercial banks are provided to small and marginal farmers. The details for the years 1997-98 to 2003-04 is as under:—

(Amt. Rs. in crore)

Year	Upto 1 Hectare		1-2 Hectares		Total Disbursements		% of credit to SF/MF
	No. of accounts	Amount	No. of accounts	Amount	No. of accounts	Amount	
1997-98	2104300	2288	1811300	2412.5	5335800	9527.5	49
1998-99	2307700	2786.6	1877500	3180.7	5844500	11829.3	50.4
1999-00	2341800	3337.8	1871200	3466.9	5793500	14013.6	48.5
2000-01	2382400	3739.6	1860300	3641.6	5841300	14515.3	50.8
2001-02	2678600	4351.8	1933000	4370.5	6970000	16300.1	53.6
2002-03	2494000	4834.2	1934200	5577.7	6411300	21856.5	47.6
2003-04	3711000	7953.1	2694500	7340.3	8664700	31885.2	48.0

Source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy 2005-06-RBI

Similarly in the case of RRBSs, the target for lending to priority sector has been set at 60%. A large majority of the clientele of RRBSs is comprised of small and marginal farmers.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. To reduce the burden of interest on crop loans availed by farmers for Kharif and Rabi 2005-06, an amount equal to two percentage points of the borrower's liability on the principal amount upto Rs. 1,00,000/- each was credited to their account. Thereafter, from Kharif 2006, to ensure that the farmer receives Short-Term Production Credit at 7% with an upper limit of Rs. 3 lacs on the principal amount, the Government is providing interest subvention of 2% per annum to Public Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Cooperative Banks on their lending from their own resources and refinance at concessional rates to cooperative banks and RRBs on their borrowings from NABARD.

Development of cruise tourism

*210. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to develop cruise tourism;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Ministry of Environment and Forests has posed objections to cruise tourism; and

(d) if so, the reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) Ministry of Tourism in partnership with Ministry of Shipping has been promoting cruise tourism in the country both for domestic and overseas tourists. A High Power Steering Group under the Chairmanship of Minister of Shipping with Minister of Tourism and Culture as co-chairperson has been set up to formulate cruise shipping policy. The Steering Group has recommended policy measures for issues related to smooth immigration and customs clearance, upgradation of ports infrastructural facilities, connectivity to ports, rationalisation of taxation and cabotage relaxation to promote and develop cruise tourism products. Ministry of Tourism has already given clearance for operation of the following cruise services.